

Anecdotes, Similes
and Sayings
of
Syedna Ali Ibne Abitalib (R.A)



Compiled by
Khusro Qasim

NASIR : Imam Jafar Sadiq Foundation
(Ahl-e-Sunnat)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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Anecdotes of Hadrat Ali

He decried flattery

Once a person flattered Hadrat Ali. Hadrat Ali said:

“Do not flatter me. I am not what you say, but I am more than what you think of me in your heart.”

He denounced praise

One day Hadrat Ali delivered a sermon which was most impressive and eloquent. Some one praised him for his sermon. He said:

“Do not praise me. That would mislead and beguile me into vainglory. Remember that all praise is for God alone.”

He would carry his own burden

One day Hadrat Ali purchased some provisions in the market. It was a heavy load and he carried it himself. Many persons offered to carry the load for him. He refused the offer saying that everyone should carry his burden himself.

He did not want the people to follow in his retinue

One day Hadrat Ali was riding a horse. Some people followed him and began to walk in his train.

He asked them why they were following him. They said that they felt elated to walk in his retinue.

“Go back to your business. By walking behind me you will breed feelings of inferiority in yourselves and infect me with arrogance.”

He prayed patience to bear suffering

At the battle of Uhud, Hadrat Ali received over a hundred wounds. In spite of these wounds he continued fighting and said:

“May God grant me patience to bear this suffering. It is a favour of God that he gave me the courage to stand and fight and not to leave the battlefield.”

His complaint against his people

One night Hadrat Ali saw the Holy Prophet in a dream. He complained to the Holy Prophet that he had received much trouble from his people. The Holy Prophet said that he might invoke the curse of God on them. When it was day, he lifted his hands after the morning prayer and said:

“O God, give me a better people and give these people a worse ruler than me.”

He rode on a mule instead of a horse

When going to battle, Hadrat Ali used to ride on a mule instead of a horse. He was asked why he preferred a mule to a horse when he would carry

him faster. He said that it was so he did not wish to fly from the battlefield.

He would never turn his back to the enemy

Hadrat Ali always wore the armour on the front of his body. He was asked why he did not wear the armour on his back. He said that it was so because he did not want to turn his back to the enemy.

He would not seek a concession

Once Hadrat Ali went to the market to purchase some cloth. He went to a shop and a shopkeeper recognizing him offered the cloth at a concessional. Hadrat Ali refused to make the purchase.

He preferred slave to himself

Once Hadrat Ali went to the market to purchase some cloth for himself and his slave. One piece was purchased at a higher price and the other at a lower price. He gave the costlier piece of cloth to his slave and kept the cloth of inferior quality for himself.

He had no ambition for the caliphate

It is related that when on the way to Basra, Hadrat Ali and his troops were camping at Rabda, Ibn Abbas came to see him. At that time Hadrat Ali was mending his shoe. Hadrat Ali asked Ibn Abbas

to what would be the value of the shoe. Ibn Abbas said that the old shoe had hardly any value and its value would at the most not exceed quarter of a dirham. Hadrat Ali there upon said, "By god, this shoe is more valuable to me than the caliphate. I have no ambition to rule."

He freed the slave who did not respond to his call

Once Hadrat Ali called his slave, but the slave did not respond to his call. He called him thrice, but the slave kept silent. Thereafter Hadrat Ali went to the slave and said, "Did you not hear my call?" He said that he had listened to his call, but was at that time calling upon God Who had subjected him to the humiliation of slavery." Thereupon Hadrat Ali said, "I release you from slavery forthwith in the name of God."

He saw God with inward eyes

Once Hadrat Ali was asked whether he had seen God. He said that verily he had seen God because he could not worship Him without knowing Him. He was asked how he had seen him and he said that He had seen him with the inward eyes of the heart.

He lost consciousness while praying

Once an arrow stuck in the feet of Hadrat Ali. It could not be taken out because of the intensity of the pain felt. When Hadrat Ali stood up in prayers,

he was so much absorbed in the devotional exercise that the surgeon pulled to the arrow without Hadrat Ali feeling any pain.

He would not play enemy on its own coin

At the battlefield of Siffin, the forces of Muawiyah had the control over the source of water supply and they would not allow, thereto, the troops of Hadrat Ali. When the troops of Hadrat Ali overpowered the enemy and got control over the source of water supply, Hadrat Ali was advised that he should deny access of water to the enemy. He repudiated the advice saying that he would not pay the enemy in its own coin, but in the coin of Islam.

He preferred his men to himself

During the water shortage in siffin he refused to quench his own thirst saying that the water should be given to those of his men who were more thirsty than him.

Two wrongs cannot make a right

When, after the battle of Siffin, Muawiah began harassing the people by making raids into the territory adjoining Syria, the Governor of Hadrat Ali, Kameel b Ziyad, suggested that he should be authorized to lead retributive expeditions into Syria. Hadrat Ali turned down the suggestion saying, "Two wrongs cannot make a right. Let Muawiyah take

pleasure in harassing innocent people. I cannot resort to such measures.”

He was dispirited because he had no guest

One day Hadrat Ali felt unusually dispirited and dejection. When asked about the reason for his unusual dejection he said that he was feeling dispirited he had received no guest for a week.

He wore dress of coarse cloth

Hadrat Ali always wore dress of coarse cloth. When asked why did he wear such shabby dress when he was the head of the State, he said that it was so because coarse cloth softened the heart while fine cloth hardened the heart.

He wanted to travel light

The house of Hadrat Ali was bereft of the usual furniture. When asked why he deprived himself of such necessities when he was the ruler of a State he said, “This life is a journey and while on a journey one should travel light. I have booked my luggage for the destination-the Hereafter.”

He would not break open the lock of the shop of God

Once Aqueel, a brother of Hadrat Ali, asked him to provide some relief for him as he was feeling sore. Hadrat Ali said that when he got his usual allowance from the Baitul Mal., he would give

something out of it to him. That did not satisfy Aqueel. Hadrat Ali thereupon said, "Then you may break open the locks of the shops in the market. Aqueel said, "Do you want me to become a thief," Hadrat Ali retorted "Then do you want me to break open the lock of the shop of God and become a brigand instead of the custodian of the Baitul Mal." –

He was not afraid of death

In the battle of Siffin, Hadrat Ali penetrated into the front ranks of the Syrain forces without any protective armour. One after another his assailants fell before the onslaught of his sword. His son Imam Hasan objected to such neglect to protect himself. Hadrat Ali said, "It is immaterial to me whether I fall to death or death falls on me. I love death as much as a Suckling loves the milk of its mother." –

He did not care for the booty

In a battle Hadrat Ali killed a wealthy Quraish chief Umar bin Uqba, but contrary to the Arab custom he did not mutilate his body, nor took off his costly coat of mail. When asked why he had not taken his valuable coat of mail, Hadrat Ali said, "The lion who enters the battlefield either himself or is killed. He does not bother about the booty."

He would not own the treasure in the land that he had purchased

Once Hadrat Ali purchased a plot of land from a person in Madina. When the plot was dug a treasure was found therein. Hadrat Ali would not accept the treasure as it did not from a part of his transaction with the original owner. He offered the treasure to the original owner, but he too did not accept it. Thereupon Hadrat Ali distributed the entire treasure in charity.

He undertook to clear the debt of a dead Muslim

Once the Holy Prophet attended the funeral of a dead Muslim. Before leading the funeral prayer, the Holy Prophet enquired whether the dead man had to clear any debt. He was informed that the dead man had to pay the debt of a dinar. The Holy Prophet said that before he could lead the funeral prayer someone should undertake the responsibility of clearing the debt of the dead Muslim. It was Hadrat Ali who stepped forward to undertake the responsibility for clearing the debt.

He would not accept the allegiance from whom he had released

Marwan, a cousin of Muawiyah, was a bitter enemy of Hadrat Ali. He had played a great part in inciting revolt against the caliph of Hadrat Ali. He was taken captive on the battle of the Camel at Basra

and when brought before Hadrat Ali he asked for mercy. Hadrat Ali released him unconditionally. Thereupon Marwan offered to pay allegiance to him, but Hadrat Ali said, "I did not want his allegiance. I released him for the sake of God and not for securing allegiance to me."

He did not believe in the prognostications of the astrologer

When Hadrat Ali led his troops against the Kharijites at the battle of Nahrawan, an astrologer advised him not to proceed to battle as the time was not propitious. Hadrat Ali refused to act on the advice saying: All knowledge of the unknown belongs to God. I cannot accept any person as a partner in the knowledge of God."

He would take no precaution to protect himself

During the last days of his life, when Hadrat Ali was asked to take protective measures against any murderous attack, he said, "The shield of God is around my body, and nobody can harm me against the will of God. And if God wills me to be martyred, no protective measures will avail."

People stood in the way of his right

At Basra, someone said to Hadrat Ali that he was ambitious for the caliphate. Hadrat Ali said, "I am not ambitious, what has happened is that there

are people who stand in the way of my right. To strive for the right is no ambition.”

Spacious house

At Basra, Hadrat Ali went to the house of one of his companions A’ala b Ziyad. He had constructed a spacious house. Hadrat Ali was critical of the spaciousness of the house. He said, “A’ala what have you gained by constructing a spacious house in his world. You should have built a spacious house for yourself in the world Hereafter.”

Renunciation, not the way of Islam

It was complained to Hadrat Ali that one of his Companions Asim b Ziyad was undergoing devotional exercise to such an extent that he had neglected and disregarded his obligations to his wife and children. Hadrat Ali reprimanded him and said that renunciation was not the way of Islam. He asked him to maintain a proper balance between his duties to God and his duties to the people.

Hosting Dinner

When it was brought to the notice of Hadrat Ali that one of his Governors had hosted a big dinner. Hadrat Ali wrote him a letter expressing his disapproval and said: “What have you gained by hosting such dinner where the wealthy are fed extravagantly and the poor are turned out.”

He could still wield the sword

Writing to Muawiyah, Hadrat Ali said in one of his letters, "I wield the same sword with which I severed the head of your maternal grandfather, maternal uncle and brother with the same stroke."

Similes of Hadrat Ali

Similes of Hadrat Ali

Hadrat Ali had the peculiar skill to explain things by giving appropriate similes. In his addresses and sermons we come across many instances of the brilliance of his expression in bringing home the truth through interesting examples.

The world

He likened the world a serpent which was outwardly very soft skinned but poisonous from within.

Falsehood

Hadrat Ali Held that like the feathers of a peacock, falsehood might look very attractive, but was as ugly as the feet of the peacock. Falsehood has no legs to stand upon.

The unbelievers

Hadrat Ali compared the unbelievers to a bat which can see when it is dark, but which is blind and cannot see anything it is daylight.

The people who did not respond to his call

When Hadrat Ali exhorted the people of Iraq to respond to his call for war against Muawiyah,

they did not respond to his call. He said, “you are like a pregnant woman who undergoes the ordeal of childbirth, but gives to a dead child.”

The people of Basra

When the people of Basra who had originally taken the oath of allegiance to him, but later chose to fight against him, Hadrat Ali said that these people were near the water but far from the sky.

People of the age of ignorance

Referring to the people of the age of ignorance in the pre-Islamic era, Hadrat Ali said that they were like an egg which is broken in the nest.

The people of Kufa

Addressing the people of Kufa, Hadrat Ali said: “When I invite you to fight, your eyes begin to move in your sockets as if you are in the agony of death. You are like the camels whose herdsmen have disappeared and when these animals are collected on one side, they scatter on the other side.”

The people who run after the world

About the people who run after the world, Hadrat Ali said: “Those people who run after the world are like beasts who fall at one another, with the strong oppressing the weak.”

The people who are not deceived by the world

About the people who are not deceived by the world, Hadrat Ali said, "Those who have understood the deceptive character of the world do not feel distressed on death. They are like the people who migrate from a famine-struck land to a land of plenty."

Hadrat Ali's complaint against the Umayyads

During the caliphate of Hadrat Usman, Hadrat Ali had a complaint that the Umayyads were withholding from him what was due to him. He said, "The Umayyads are withholding what is due to me as the camelman, when milking the camel, withholds the milk from the young one of the camel."

Shedding of sins through prayer

In a sermon, Hadrat Ali said that through prayer the sins of a man are shed as a tree sheds its leaves.

Cleanliness and prayers

In other sermon, Hadrat Ali said: "prayer is like a hot spring of water which flows at your door and provides you the where withal for cleanliness."

Crumbs after the meals

In a sermon, Hadrat Ali said that the world had run its course and nothing had left of it except the crumbs after the meals.

The people who did not respond to his call

In an address, Hadrat Ali compared the people who did not respond to his call to a camel who ran away from the herd shrieking with the pain of belly.

Heart of the people

In sermon Hadrat Ali prayed for the heart of the people to melt at the mention of the Word of God as salt dissolves in the water.

Ignorant persons

In an address, Hadrat Ali said that the ignorant persons were like a person riding on a beast of burden which could not see. He deplored that such ignorant persons dealt with the injunctions of Islam as air scatters the straw.

Patience and faith

Hadrat Ali held that patience and faith bear the same relations as in the case of a human being the head bears to the body. There can be no body without head, and there can be no faith without patience.

Diseases and sins

Hadrat Ali held that diseases sheds sins as the tree sheds the dead leaves.

Death of virtuous

Hadrat Ali compared the death of the virtuous to the migration journey of the people from a famine-struck land to a land of plenty.

Days of life

Hadrat Ali held that the days of life pass as the passing of clouds in the sky.

Devotion to the world

Hadrat Ali held that those who are devoted to the world are like barking dogs and ferocious animals who fall at one another and the strong devour the weak.

Seekers of the world

Hadrat Ali compared the men seeking the world to camels which are let loose and which roam about causing mischief.

Virtue of silence

Hadrat Ali advocated the virtue of silence by advancing the simile that water can be preserved in a water skin only when its mouth is tied.

Thirsty camels on a water pond

When the people flocked to him and urged him to accept their allegiance, Hadrat Ali compared them to thirsty camels who flock to the water pond when their string are untied.

The simile of a sinner

Hadrat Ali held that a sinner is like a person riding on an animal over which he has no control and which is running fast to hurl him into precipice.

Drops of rain

Hadrat Ali held that the injunctions of God descend like the drops of rain.

The summer clouds

When the people of Kufa did not respond to the call of Hadrat Ali to rise to meet the challenge of Muawiyah, Hadrat Ali said that he longed for warriors who in their action and speed should be like the summer clouds.

Goat and the lion

Addressing the people of Kufa, Hadrat Ali said, "I want you to tread the path of the truth, but you run from it as the goat runs away on hearing the roar of a lion."

Taking the thorn out of the foot with a thorn

On another occasion Hadrat Ali said that the people of Kufa were like a person who picked out the thorn from his foot with a thorn.

Solution of salt water

With reference to the people of Kufa, Hadrat Ali prayed "O God melt their hearts as the salt is dissolved in water."

Shaking of plants

Referring to the piety of the companions of the Holy Prophet, Hadrat Ali said that they shuddered at the mention of the Hereafter as the plants shake when a strong wind blows.

Pregnant woman separating from the child

Addressing the people of Kufa, Hadrat Ali said that they were not dependable and they were likely to leave him, as the pregnant woman on childbirth from the child bred in her womb.

Household of the Prophet

Hadrat Ali said that the simile of the household of the Holy Prophet was like stars which if one starsets another star rises.

Sayings of Hadrat Ali

His sayings

Hadrat Ali was an embodiment of knowledge and wisdom. Some of the sayings of Hadrat Ali which breathe wisdom and have attained the dimensions of aphorisms are on record. Some of these are quoted hereunder:

- (1) Fear God and you will have no cause to fear anyone.
- (2) Resignation of the will of God is the cure of the disease of the heart.
- (3) The word of God is the medicine of the heart.
- (4) Lead such a life that when you die, the people may mourn you and while you are alive they long for your company.
- (5) The days of life pass away like clouds, so do good while you are alive.
- (6) Of all the follies the greatest is to love the world.
- (7) Opportunity is swift to of flight but slow to return.

- (8) Pride, cowardice and miserliness are bad for men but good for woman.
- (9) The most happy is he to whom God has given a good wife.
- (10) He who knows himself knows God.
- (11) Do not sell your conscience for anything but heaven.
- (12) The disease of the heart is worse than the disease of the body.
- (13) To fight against one's desires is the greatest of all fights.
- (14) The strongest amongst you is he who subdues his self.
- (15) Wealth and greed are the roots of all evils.
- (16) Riches without faith are the greatest poverty.
- (17) A man's worth depends upon the nobility of his aspirations.
- (18) Knowledge enlivens the soul.
- (19) The learned lives although he dies.
- (20) The sum total of excellence is knowledge.
- (21) To respect the learned is to respect God.
- (22) Generosity hides shortcomings.
- (23) The wealth of a miser is as useless as a pebble.

- (24) Desire is one's most inveterate enemy.
- (25) Those who walk on the surface of the earth shall one day be interred in it.
- (26) Every breath of man brings him nearer to death.
- (27) People are asleep as long they are alive, they are awakened when they die.
- (28) Patience is the fruit of faith.
- (29) Virtue never dies.
- (30) A man's glory virtue is greater than the glory of his pedigree.
- (31) No shelter is safer than piety.
- (32) A man's behaviour is the index of his mind.
- (33) Courtesy costs nothing but buys everything.
- (34) Clemency graces power.
- (35) Jealousy devours virtue as fire devour fuel.
- (36) He that lends a listening ear to reproach is one of those that deserve reproach.
- (37) Forgiveness is the crown of greatness.
- (38) Carnal appetites are nets spread by the devil.

- (39) Every arrow does not hit the mark, nor is every prayer granted.
- (40) Ostentatiousness spoils prayers.
- (41) Fear none but your sins.
- (42) He who praises you murders you .
- (43) A man who praises himself displays his deficiency of intellect.
- (44) Honour your parents and your sons will honour you.
- (45) A man is hid under his tongue.
- (46) The tongue of a wise man lies behind his heart.
- (47) The tongue pierces deeper than the spear.
- (48) He who purifies his heart from doubt is a believer.
- (49) The opinion of a wise man is an oracle.
- (50) To seek counsel is to go to the fountain of guidance.
- (51) Association with a fool is tyrannical to the soul. -
- (52) God hasten the fall of tyrants.
- (53) Tyranny leads to moral cowardice.
- (54) A tyrant's success is his moral defeat.
- (55) It is better to die than to beg.

- (56) When a man begs he loses his faith.
- (57) Hajj is the Jihad of every believer in faith.
- (58) A wise enemy is better than a foolish friend.
- (59) Silence is the best reply to a fool.
- (60) The best speech is one which is short and reasonable.
- (61) Speech is like a medicine, a small dose of which cures but an excess of which kills.
- (62) He that has no courage has no religion.
- (63) His grief is long whose hope is short.
- (64) The right of freedom of speech consists in speaking the truth.
- (65) Repentance washes away sins.
- (66) Folly is an incurable disease.
- (67) To assist the wrong is to oppress the right.
- (68) Sinning is a disease, repentance is its medicine and abstinence from it a sure cure.
- (69) Sorrow makes a man old before his time.
- (70) Pride impedes progress and mars greatness.
- (71) To forgive is the crown of greatness.
- (72) He who understands humanity seeks solitude.

- (73) Right is the best argument.
- (74) Misrepresentation spoils narration.
- (75) As a man's wisdom increases, so his desire to speak decreases.
- (76) He who seeks to do Justice with men, let him desire for them what he desires for himself.
- (77) The greatest sin is the sin which the sinner considers to be ordinary.
- (78) Contentment is the asset which is never exhausted.
- (79) Government are a trial for men.
- (80) He who fights against the truth, the truth will defeat him.
- (81) Finding fault in others is one's greatest fault.
- (82) Haste is a species of madness.
- (83) Greed is perpetual enslavement.
- (84) He who does not know his own worth is doomed to destruction.
- (85) The best investment is one with which duties are performed.
- (86) Anger is a fire kindled, he who restrains anger extinguishes the fire; he who gives

vent to it is the first to be consumed by such fire.

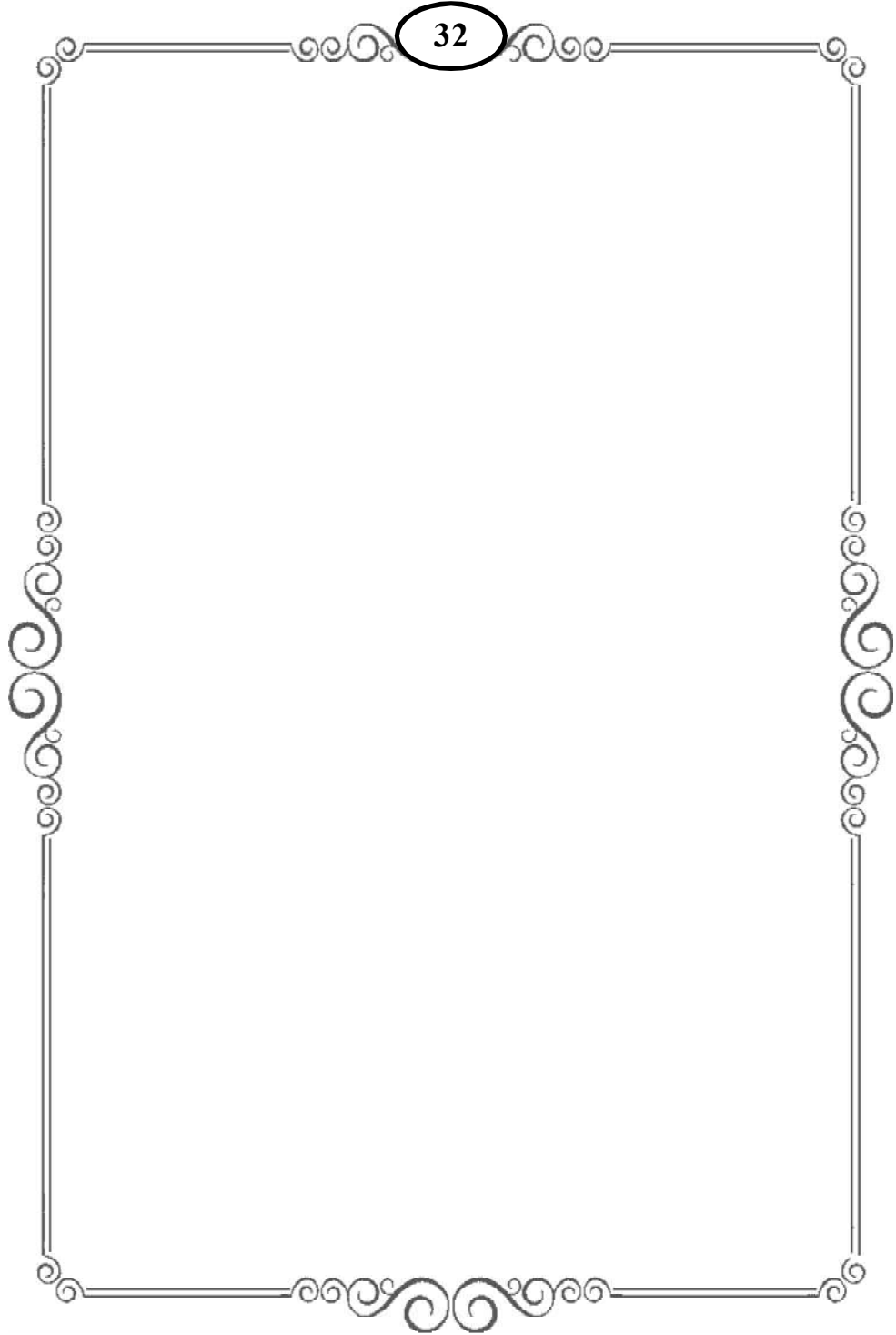
- (87) Jihad is the highway of prosperity.
- (88) None is more solitary than a miser.
- (89) Knowledge is the ornament of the rich and the riches of the poor.
- (90) Knowledge is the sum total of excellence.
- (91) He who teaches you a letter binds you with a fetter of gratitude.
- (92) As long as we do not hope, we do not fret.
- (93) He who indulges in jokes and loose talk loses a part of his wisdom.
- (94) Truth is bitter, but its result is sweet; falsehood appears to be sweet but it is poisonous is its effect.
- (95) Miserliness is the root of many evils.
- (96) Knowledge and practice are twins and both go together-there is no knowledge without practice and no practice without knowledge.
- (97) He who dissembles plays with his honour.
- (98) When God wants to humiliate a person he deprives him of knowledge.
- (99) When your power increases, decrease your desires accordingly.

- (100) He who listens to a back-better loses a friend.
- (101) It is no justice to decide a case on mere conjecture.
- (102) He who does not know his own worth is deemed to ignomy.
- (103) He who practices thrift would never be in want.
- (104) He who does not know should not be ashamed to learn.
- (105) Patience is to faith what head is to body.
When patience goes, faith goes, when head goes, the body goes,
- (106) The grace of God is the best guide.
- (107) A good disposition is the best companion.
- (108) Wisdom is the best friend.
- (109) Good breeding is the best inheritance.
- (110) There is nothing more hateful than pride.
- (111) He who trusts the world, the world betrays him.
- (112) Mix with the people with your tongue, but be separate from them in your deeds.
- (113) Be generous but do not be a spendthrift.
- (114) Do not run after the world, let the world run after you.

- (115) A wise man is he who does not despair or the bounty and mercy of God.
- (116) He who is aware of his own faults is oblivious is the fault of others.
- (117) What the eye sees the heart preserves.
- (118) The vision of the eye is limited; the vision of the heart transcends all barriers of time and space.
- (119) Do not be misled by appearance for these are apt to be deceptive.
- (120) Do not have too many irons in the fire; concentrate on one thing at a time.
- (121) What you do not like for your self, do not like it for others.
- (122) Contentment is the treasure which is never exhausted.
- (123) The advice of old men is dearer than the bravery of young men.
- (124) That knowledge is superficial which is merely on the tongue; that knowledge is real which demonstrates itself in your practice.
- (125) Waste of time is one's greatest loss.
- (126) He who knows to keep his secret knows the way to success.

- (127) Foresight is the way to safety.
- (128) No relationship is stronger than the relationship that exists between man and God.
- (129) Enlighten the heart with prayers.
- (130) Strengthen your heart with faith.
- (131) Suppress all lust with piety.
- (132) Do not sell the Hereafter for the world.
- (133) Do not speak in a state of ignorance.
- (134) Refrain from unnecessary talk.
- (135) Do not tread the path from which you can apprehend the danger of running astray.
- (136) In the affairs of God, do not be afraid of the accusations of the evil mongers.
- (137) In all that you do seek the protection of God.
- (138) Do not cover what is undesirable.
- (139) If you seek the truth neither stray from the right path, or be assailed by doubts.
- (140) Do not become a slave of your desires.
- (141) That wealth is no wealth which brings dishonour.

- (142) Whatever harm accrues of silence can be remedied but whatever harm is done because of speech cannot be remedied.
- (143) It is better to restrain your desires than to stretch your hand before others.
- (144) A little that is earned because of honest labour is better than a larger amount gained through dishonest means.
- (145) Guard well your secret.
- (146) He who seeks more than what is necessary indulges in error.
- (147) To oppress the weak is the worst tyranny.
- (148) Do not bank on false hopes for that is the capital of the dead.
- (149) A wiseman takes a lesson even from a minor lapse.
- (150) Overpower desires and suspicions by patience and faith.
- (151) He who does not take the middle course strays.
- (152) A stranger is he who has no friends.
- (153) When hopes are frustrated despair becomes the way of life.



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